

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Context

Many recent efforts have attempted to reduce rates of alcohol and other drug use among teens. Wisconsin parents have a tradition of accepting some level of teen drinking, but are concerned about rates of binge drinking, and drinking and driving (Pawlisch, Holloway, Thompson & Fernan, 1993). Crashes that occur as a result of driving while under the influence are a major factor in unintentional injuries (Bureau for Health Information, 1996b). However, a recent study by the UW–Extension found that eight out of ten parents still believe that it is unlikely that their child drinks with friends (Bogenschneider, et al., 1996). There is also widespread concern about the use of illegal drugs such as marijuana.

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, an annual survey conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (1998), found that one in ten youths aged 12-17 in America reported current use of illicit drugs in 1998. A report by the Wisconsin Statistical Analysis Center (Eversen, et al., 1996) noted that juvenile arrests for drug offenses has steadily increased since 1990 and accounted for 22 percent of all drug violation arrests in 1995. The 2,809 juvenile arrests for the possession of marijuana “outnumbers all other juvenile drug arrests combined.” At the same time, a recent survey found that nearly all of the Wisconsin parents said that it was unlikely that their child used marijuana or other drugs (Bogenschneider, et al., 1996). In addition, the juvenile arrest rate for liquor law violations was 835 per 100,000, five times higher than the national rate of 168 per 100,000.

Highlights

- Over half of all students reported having had at least one alcoholic beverage in the past 30 days. Very few students (four percent) reported drinking on school grounds.
- The proportion of students who reported having had five or more drinks at one time in the past month increased to 34 percent in 1999 from 29 percent in 1993. Two-thirds of students who had drunk in the past month drank five or more drinks at one time.
- There was a slight increase from 1993 to 1999 among students who said that they had never drunk alcohol from 20 percent to 23 percent.
- Male students were more frequent alcohol drinkers and were more likely to report binge drinking than female students.
- Slightly more than one-fifth of all students reported using marijuana in the past 30 days.
- Students in Wisconsin are less likely to have ever used marijuana than the national average.
- Students in 1999 were significantly more likely to have used marijuana in the past thirty days than students in 1993. This rose from 11 percent to 22 percent.
- Students in 1999 were significantly more likely to have reported using cocaine ever in their lives than students in 1993. This rose from five percent to nine percent.
- Students in 1999 were significantly more likely to have someone offer, sell or give them illegal drugs at school than students in 1993. This rose from 20 percent to 29 percent.

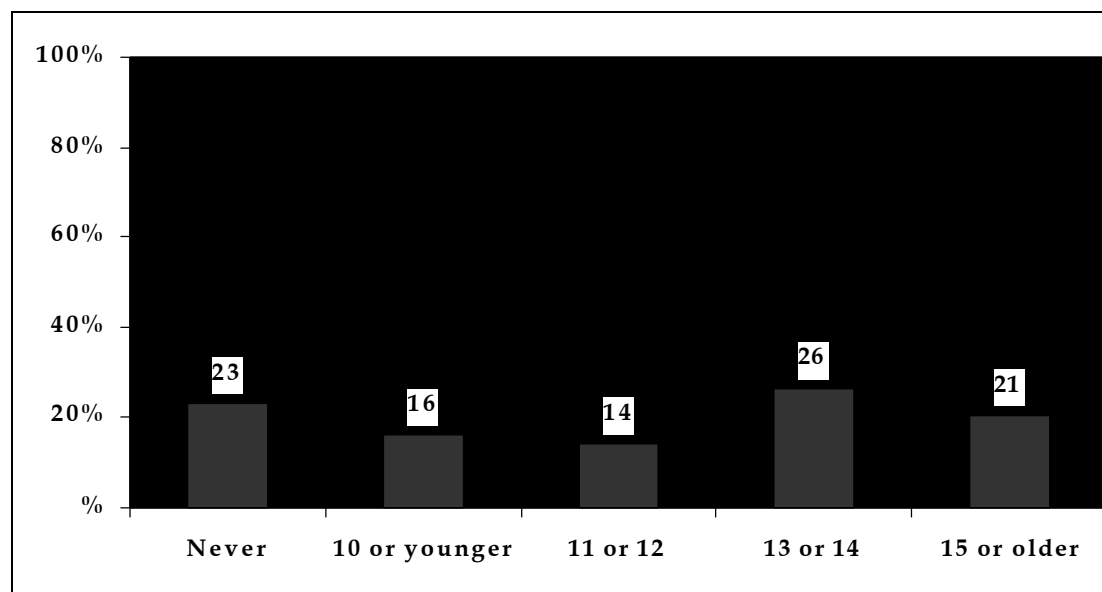
General Prevalence Rates

Students were asked if it is important to them not to use alcohol or other drugs. Fifty-one percent of all students said that it was important to them not to use alcohol or other drugs. Nineteen percent said that they were not sure while an additional 30 percent disagreed with the statement.

Nearly a quarter of students said they had never had a drink of alcohol¹ (see Figure 1). Thirty percent report having had their first drink of alcohol before the age of 13. Twenty-six percent of students report having had their first drink at the age of 13 or 14. Over half of all students reported having had at least one alcoholic beverage in the past 30 days and two-thirds of those reported having had five or more drinks at one time in the same time period (see Figure 2). For comparison, the 1997 Wisconsin Behavioral Risk Factor Survey found that about a quarter of adults had had five or more drinks at one time in the past 30 days. Among those students who had had any drinks in the past 30 days, over two-thirds reported drinking on five or fewer days. However, when students drink, they are likely to drink heavily. Two-thirds of students who had drunk at all in the past month drank five or more alcoholic beverages on at least one occasion (see Figure 3). This was nearly evenly divided between those who did so on one or two days (36%) and those that did so on three or more days (31%). Very few students (four percent) reported drinking any alcoholic beverages on school grounds.

Figure 1. Age of First Drink

Percentage of all students by the age at which they had their first drink of alcohol more than just a few sips.



¹ A “drink” was defined to exclude having “a few sips” of alcohol.

Figure 2. Recent Drinking

Percentage of all students who reported drinking on at least one day in the past 30, and the percentage of those who reported having five or more drinks at one time at least once in the past 30 days.

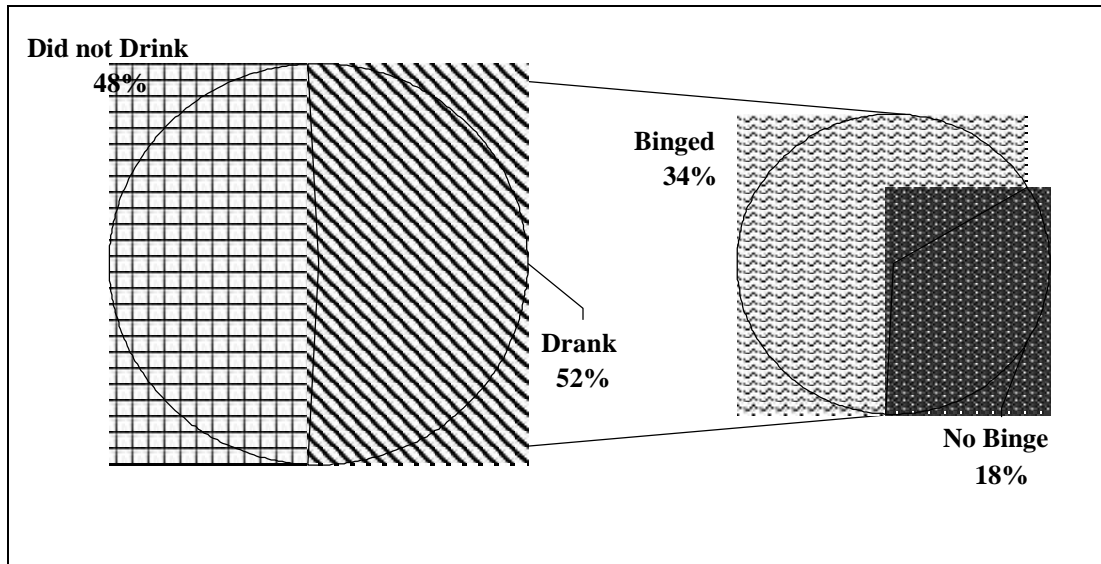
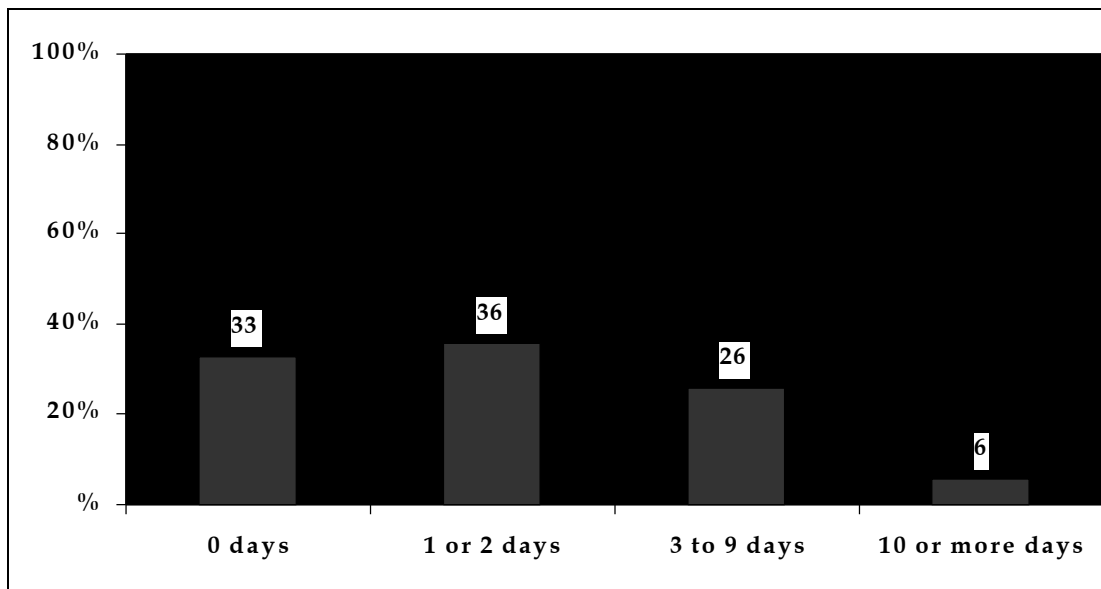


Figure 3. Binge Drinking Frequency among Current Drinkers

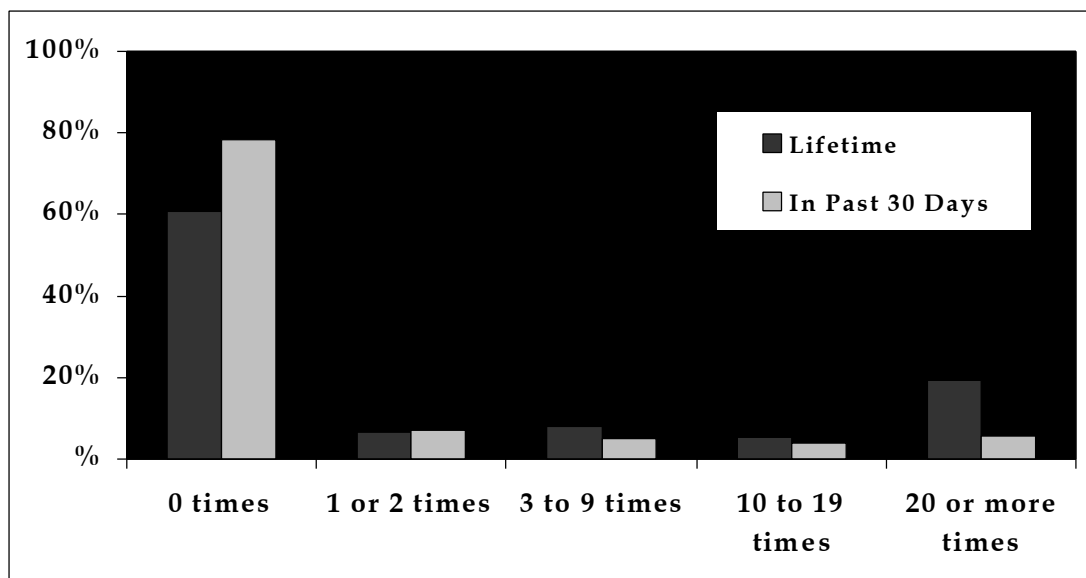
Percentage of students who drank on at least one day in the past 30 categorized by the number of days on which they had five or more drinks at one time in the past 30 days.



Nearly four in ten students said that they had ever tried marijuana (see Figure 4). Slightly more than two-thirds of those who had ever used marijuana tried it for the first time between the ages of 13 and 16. More than a third of students who have ever tried marijuana said they used it less than ten times, while half have used it 20 or more times. Slightly more than one-fifth of all students reported using marijuana at least once in the past 30 days. Of those who used any marijuana in the past 30 days, a third said that they had only used it one or two times, but nearly a quarter claimed to have used it 20 or more times. The percentage of marijuana users who said that they used marijuana on school property in the past 30 days is greater than the number who claimed to have had a drink of alcohol on school grounds in the same time period (6 versus 4 percent). About three in ten students said that someone offered, sold, or gave them illegal drugs on school property in the past 12 months.

Figure 4. Lifetime and Current Marijuana Use

Percentage of all students by the number of times in their life and in the past 30 days they have used marijuana.



A minority of students used other illegal drugs. Sixteen percent said that they had used an inhalant² to get high at least once in their life. Over half of the students who ever used inhalants only used them once or twice, a quarter said that they had used them between three and nine times and another quarter reported using them ten or more times. Four percent reported using inhalants in the past 30 days. Eleven percent of students reported using LSD at least once in their life though half of those said that they had used it only once or twice. Nine percent of students said that they had tried at least one form³ of cocaine and four percent had used cocaine in the past 30 days. Nine percent of all students also reported ever using methamphetamines. Nearly half of those had only used them once or twice. Three percent of all students reported ever using heroin. Three percent of students reported taking steroids without a doctor's prescription. Two percent reported ever using a needle to inject an illegal drug into their body.

When 1997 National YRBS results and 1999 Wisconsin YRBS results are compared, two significant differences emerge. First, students in Wisconsin are less likely to report ever using marijuana than the

² Including sniffing glue, the contents of aerosol spray cans, or paint.

³ Including powder, crack, or freebase.

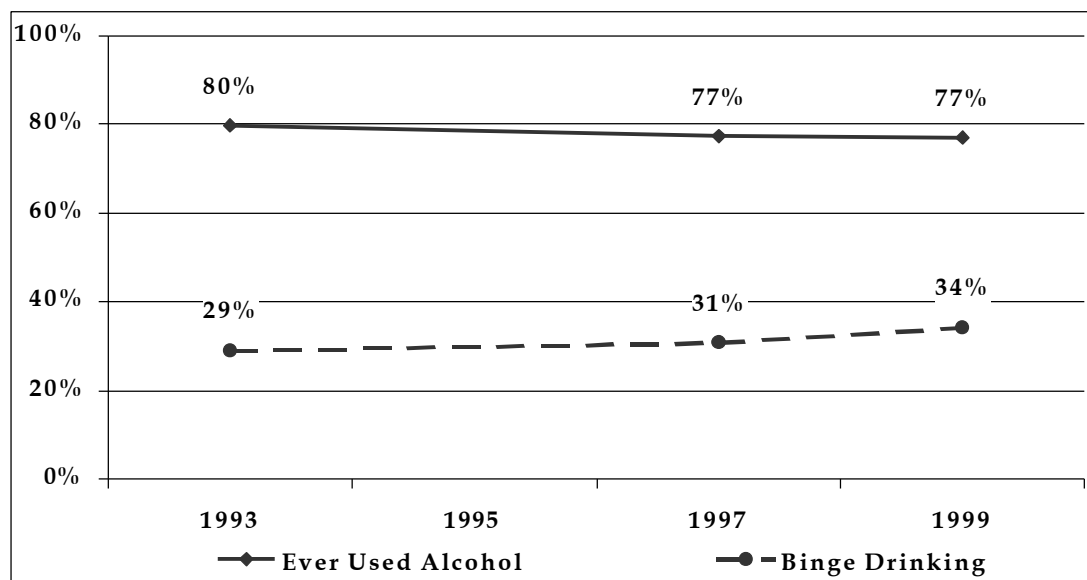
national average (39 percent compared to 47 percent). Second, students in Wisconsin were also less likely to report ever using LSD than the national average (11 percent compared to 17 percent).

Trends

There was a slight but significant increase from 1993 to 1999 among students who said they had never drunk alcohol (see Figure 5). And, while there was no significant difference among those who stated they drank in the past 30 days there was a significant increase among students who reported binge drinking during that time. In 1993, 29 percent of all students reported having five or more drinks at one time compared to 31 percent of all students in 1997 and 34 percent of all students in 1999. There was no difference among those who said that they drank alcohol on school property.

Figure 5. Change in Alcohol Use: 1993-1999.

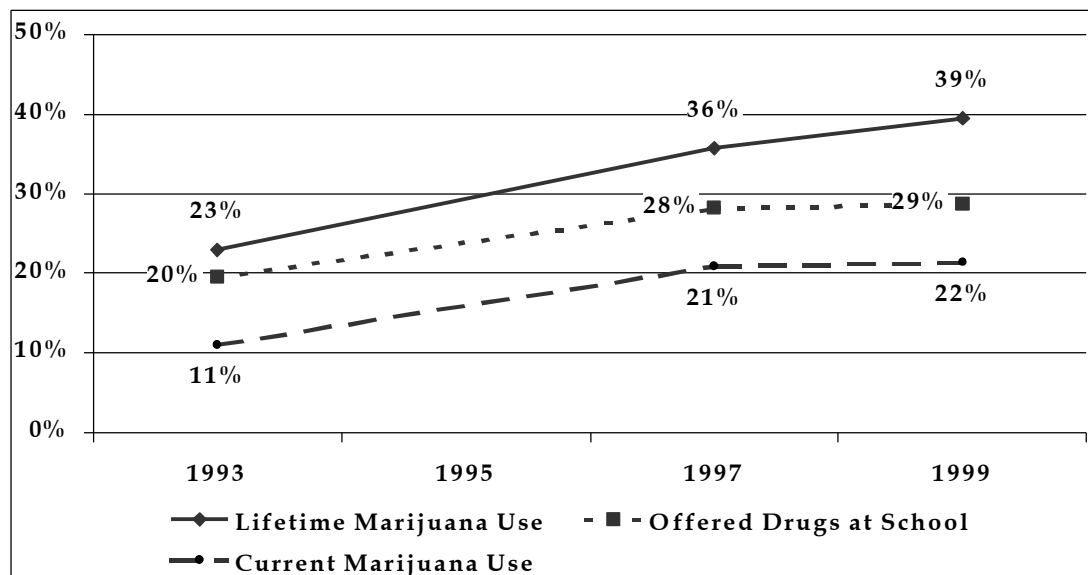
Percentage of all students who reported having at least one alcoholic drink in their lifetime and, of those students who reported drinking at all, those who reported that they had drank five or more drinks on one occasion in the past 30 days.



Students in 1999 were significantly more likely to have used marijuana in the past thirty days than students in 1993. This rose from 11 percent to 22 percent. There was also a significant increase in the number of times students reported having used marijuana in their life (with the percentage of students who reported using marijuana 10 or more times increasing from 11 to 25 percent) and the percentage who reported having used it ever. There was also a significant increase in the percentage of students who reported having ever used any form of cocaine. Five percent of students in 1993 said that they had ever used cocaine compared to seven percent in 1997 and nine percent in 1999. The slight increase was also apparent for those who reported using cocaine in the past month (three percent in 1993 and 1997 compared to four percent in 1999). There were no differences in the use of inhalants, LSD or unprescribed steroids⁴. Students in 1999 were significantly more likely to have had someone offer, sell, or give them illegal drugs at school than students in 1993 (from 20 to 29 percent).

Figure 6. Change in Marijuana Use and Drug Availability: 1993-1997

Percentage of all students who had used marijuana in the past 30 days, or ever in their lives, or who had had someone offer, give, or sell them drugs on school property in the past 12 months by year of study.



⁴ Because of differences in the wording of questions between 1993 and 1997, no comparison of LSD use is possible for those years. In addition, though students appeared somewhat more likely to report having injected an illegal drug into their body, the extremely low prevalence rate makes any comparison ill advised.

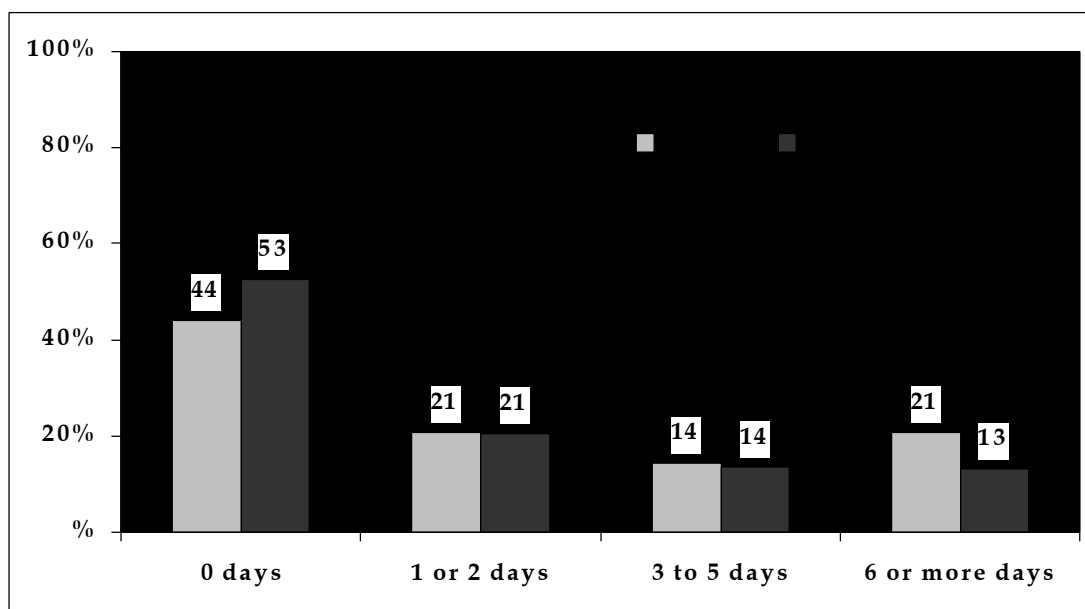
Comparisons by Demographic Groups

Gender

There were many significant differences between male and female students in drug and alcohol usage. Female students (57 percent) were much more likely to report that it was important to them to not use alcohol or other drugs than male students (46 percent) were. Female students were somewhat more likely to report never having had a drink than male students. Students of both genders were most likely to start drinking between the ages of 13 or 14. There is no difference by gender in the number of occasional student drinkers⁵, but male students are more likely to be frequent drinkers⁶ while female students are more likely to have abstained (see Figure 7). Fifty-three percent of female students reported having no alcoholic beverages in the past 30 days, compared to only 44 percent of male students. Conversely, 21 percent of male students reported having had a drink on six or more days, compared to only 13 percent of female students. There are no significant differences between the genders in those who report drinking on school property.

Figure 7. Frequency of Drinking by Gender

Percentage of all students by the number of days in the past 30 on which they drank alcohol by gender.



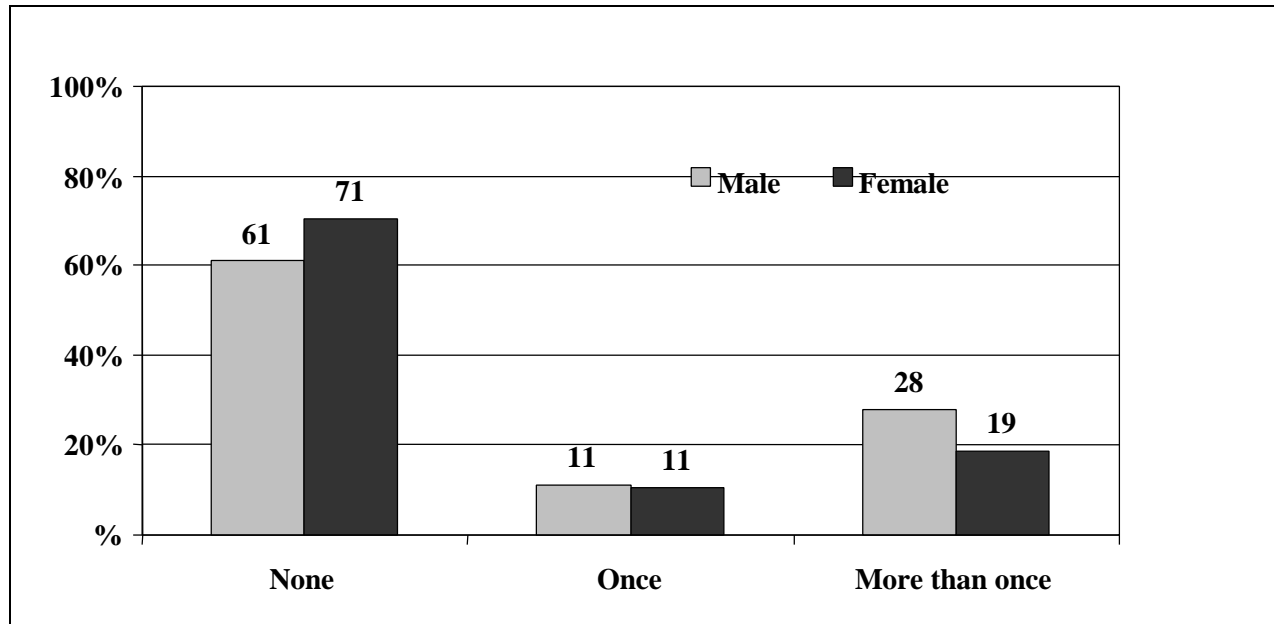
⁵ Defined here as students having an alcoholic beverage on one to five days in the past 30 days.

⁶ Defined here as students having an alcoholic beverage on six or more of the past 30 days.

Male students were also much more likely to report binge drinking (see Figure 8). Seventy-one percent of female students reported not having had five or more drinks at one time in the past 30 days compared to 61 percent of male students. While there is little difference in the percentage of male and female students who report binge drinking once in the past 30 days, male students were significantly more likely to report binge drinking more than once. Twenty-eight percent of male students report binge drinking more than once in the past 30 days compared to 19 percent of female students.

Figure 8. Binge Drinking by Gender

Percentage of all students by the number of times in the past 30 days when they had five or more alcoholic drinks at one time by gender.



The percentage of male students who reported ever trying marijuana is greater than the percentage of female students reporting the same. Forty-two percent of male students said that they had tried marijuana compared to 36 percent of female students. Male students were also more likely than female students to report using marijuana at a younger age. They were also more likely to report using it more often in the past 30 days. There was no difference between male and female students in the number who claimed to have used marijuana on school property in the past 30 days.

There was no significant difference in the percentage of male students and female students who said that they had used some form of cocaine ever in their lives. However, male students were more likely to say that they had used cocaine in the past 30 days. Male students were also more likely than female students to say that they had ever used heroin, LSD, or used a needle to inject an illegal drug. There was no significant difference in the percentage of male or female students who used inhalants, methamphetamines, or unprescribed steroids. Male students were, however, slightly more likely to say that they had been offered, sold or given illegal drugs on school property in the past 12 months.

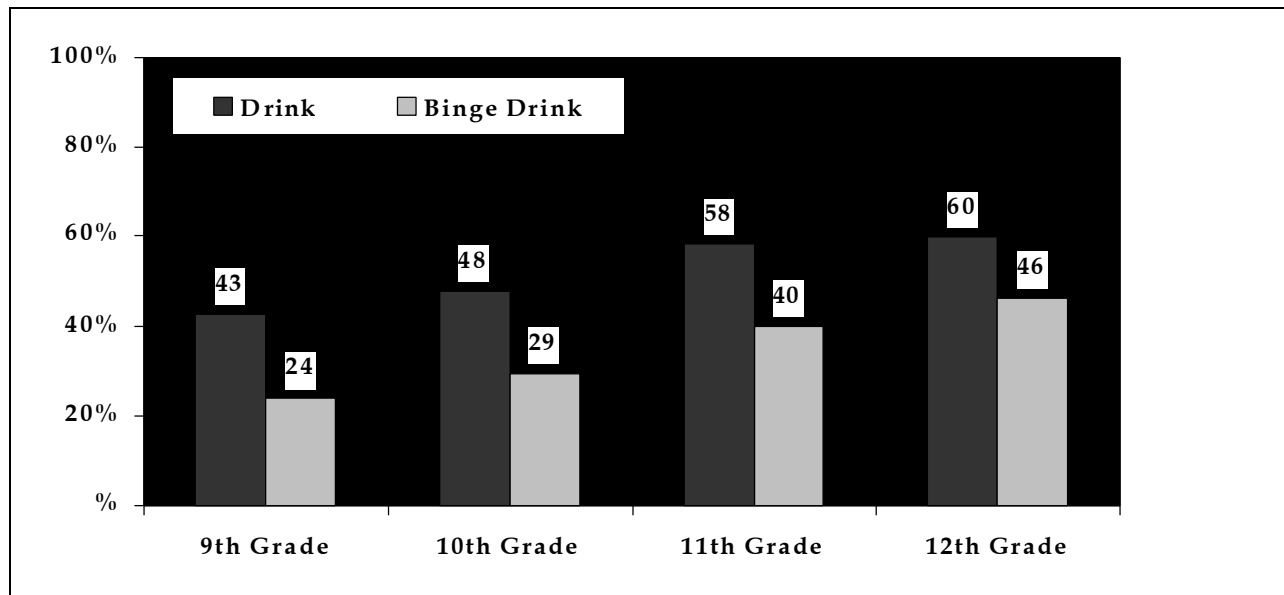
Grade

The percentage of students who say that it is important for them to not use alcohol or other drugs drops significantly across the grades. While 60 percent of ninth grade students say this, only 46 percent of twelfth grade students do the same. The percentage of students who drink and the frequency of drinking significantly increases as grade level increases. Thirty-one percent of ninth graders said that they had never had an alcoholic beverage in their lives, compared to only 17 percent of seniors. Similarly, the

percentage of students who reported having had at least one alcoholic beverage in the past 30 days increased from 43 percent of ninth graders to 60 percent of seniors (see Figure 9). Likewise, the percentage of students who reported binge drinking also increased from less than a quarter of ninth graders to nearly half of all seniors. This trend is particularly striking when the analysis is limited to students who said they had had at least one drink in the past 30 days. In this case, there appears to be a greater tendency for binge drinking to occur more often as grade level increases. There is, however, no significant difference between the grades among those who say that they drank on school property.

Figure 9. Drinking and Binge Drinking by Grade Level

Percentage of all students who drank alcohol on at least one day in the past 30 or who had five or more alcoholic drinks at one time in the past 30 days by grade level.



The same pattern of increasing prevalence with increasing grade level can be seen in marijuana use. Thirty-one percent of ninth graders said they have used marijuana at least once. The prevalence rate increased to 49 percent of twelfth graders. Likewise, the percentage of students who reported using marijuana in the past 30 days increased from 20 percent in ninth grade to 26 percent in twelfth grade. There was no significant difference between the grades in those who said they used marijuana on school property in the past 30 days. Likewise, there was little difference between the grades among those who reported that someone had offered, sold, or given them drugs while on school property. One notable exception was tenth grade students who were significantly more likely than the other grades to report that they had been offered illegal drugs on school property.

The rates of ever using cocaine were relatively constant across grade level, while the rates of using cocaine in the last 30 days increased slightly by grade level. The rates of inhalant, heroin, or steroid use showed little change between the grades. Ninth grade students were significantly less likely to use methamphetamines and LSD than students in the other grades.